

**James Knox Polk to Andrew Jackson, April 13, 1828,
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by
John Spencer Bassett.**

1 Copy.

Washington City, April 13, 1828.

Dear Sir , I received a note a few days since from the Editor of the Baltimore Republican stating that the Adams men continued to use the idle story of the "Six Militiamen" ² as their principal weapon to your

² See p. 496, note 3, *ante* .

prejudice in the State of Maryland, and requesting me to furnish him with any additional information in my power. I have answered his letter, summing up in as concise and close a manner as I could, the prominent facts connected with their service and execution. It will be published with my name.

I think the great error on our part has heretofore been, that the communications to the public on this subject have been too voluminous and too much encumbered with documents to be readily comprehended by the casual reader. Hamilton's report is very clear, but could not go minutely into the circumstances. I have procured a statement from Mr. Livingston fixing the precise time at which the rumour of peace reached you at N. Orleans, in order to put to flight the statement that has been often made, that the execution took place after the news of peace arrived. I have like wise obtained from Maj. F. W. Armstrong now at this place, and who was an eye witness at the execution, a statement containing important facts, as to the situation of the Army at the time and the importance of the example. Judge White and myself have obtained from Genl. Gaines a statement

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of other executions which took place during the War and his views on the subject. All of them will be published. The coalition I think will not venture to use it. They have as yet said nothing about it in their news papers. I would suggest as my view and the opinion of our friends here, that it would not be necessary for us to give publicity to the refutation of the calumny, until they shall attempt to use it. It will then be time enough. I am satisfied it has done no harm, and can do no harm now.

[*In the margin:*] I have heard nothing recently of Judge Williams and his Burr story. 3

3 See vol. III., pp. 428–431. The latest examination of Jackson's relations with Burr is in chapters VII. and VIII. of Marquis James's *Andrew Jackson, the Border Captain* .

It is the evident policy of the administration to keep us constantly on the defensive. My opinion is we shall "carry the War into Africa;" not by asserting falshoods, as their habit is, but facts, many of which exist to their prejudice. We should defend only when necessary, and assail when proper and when supported by truth. The Adams leaders have manifested such an utter disregard for truth, that they have in a great degree destroyed the effect of anything they can now say.

Your friends here highly approve the course you have taken in answer to the Indiana resolutions. 4 It was a political maneuver intended if possible to ensnare you. No doubt Clay was at the bottom of it. We have not yet seen it published, and Maj. Moore, 5 and Mr. Wickliff of Kentucky, doubt whether Gov. Rhea 6 (being disappointed in its contents) will allow it to be published until the meeting of the Legislature next winter. They think as I do that it may be important in the Western

4 The *National Intelligencer* of Apr. 29, 1828, gives the resolutions passed by the Indiana senate in the previous winter, seeking to draw out Jackson on internal improvements, and Jackson's reply, Feb. 28, 1828.

5 Maj. Thomas P. Moore, M. C. 1823–1829.

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6 James B. Ray, governor of Indiana 1825–1831.

States, to publish it after giving sufficient time to the Governor to do it, if he intends to. They request me to suggest, should you prefer that course, that you transmit copies to some of your friends here, to be used in their discretion, at the proper time, if from circumstances they deem it advisable. You will think of it, and do as you think best.

Very Respectfully Yr friend and obt. Svt.